RETRENCHMENT.

I never witnessed a man submitting to circumstances with good humor and good sense, so remarkably as in my friend Alexander Willemott. When I first met him , since our school days, it was at the close of the war: he had been a large contractor with government for army clothing and accoutrements, and was said to have realized an immense fortune, although his accounts were not yet settled. Indeed, it was said that they were so vast, that it would employ the time of six clerks, for two years, to examine them, previous to the balance-sheet being struck. As I observed, he had been at school with me, and on my return from the East Indies, I called upon him to renew our old acquaintance, and congratulate him upon his success.

"My dear Reynolds, I am delighted to see you. You must come down to Belem Castle ; Mrs. Willemott will receive you with pleasure, I'm sure. You shall see my two girls."

I consented. The chaise stopped at a splendid mansion, and I was ushered in by a crowd of liveried servants, Every thing was on the most sumptuous and magnificent scale. Having paid my respects to the lady of the house, I retired to dress, as dinner was nearly ready, it being then half-past seven o'clock. It was eight before we sat down. To an observation that I made, expressing a hope that I had not occasioned the dinner being put off, Willemott replied, " on the contrary, my dear Reynolds, we never sit down until about this hour. How people can dine at four or five o'clock, I cannot conceive. I could not touch a mouthful."

The dinner was excellent, and I paid it the encomiums which were its due.

" Do not be afraid, my dear fellow—my cook is an artiste extraordinaire —a regular Cordon Bleu. You may eat any thing without, fear of indigestion How people can live upon the English cookery of the present day, I cannot conceive. I seldom dine out for fear of being poisoned. Depend upon it, a good cook lengthens your days, and no price is to great to ensure one."

When the ladies retired, being alone, we entered into friendly conversation. I expressed my admiration of his daughters, who certainly were very handsome and elegant girls.

" Very true; they are more than passable," replied he. "We have had many offers, but not such as to come up to my expectations. Baronets are cheap now-a-days, and Irish lords are nothing; I hope to settle them comfortably. We shall see. Try this claret; you'll find it excellent, not a headache in a hogshead of it. How people can drink port, I cannot imagine."

The next morning he proposed that I should rattle round the park with him. I acceded, and we set off in a handsome open carriage, with four grays, ridden by postillions at a rapid pace. As we were whirling along, he observed, "In town we must of course drive but a pair, but in the country I never go out without four horses. There is a spring in four horses which is delightful ; it makes your spirits elastic, and you feel that the poor animals are not at hard labor. Rather than not drive four I would prefer to stay at home."

Our ride was very pleasant, and, in such amusements, passed away one of the most pleasant weeks that I ever remembered. Willemott was not the least altered—he was as friendly, as sincere, as open-hearted, as when a boy at school. I left him, pleased with his prosperity, and acknowledging that he was well deserving of it, although his ideas had assumed such a scale of magnificence.

I went to India when my leave expired, and was absent about four years. On my return, I inquired after my friend Willemott, and was told that his circumstances and expectations had been greatly altered. From many causes, such as a change in the government, a demand for economy, and the wording of his contracts, having been differently rendered from what Willemott had supposed their meaning to be, large items had been struck out of his balance-sheet, and, instead of being a millionaire, he was only a gentleman with a handsome property. Belem Castle had been sold, and he now lived at Richmond, as hospitable as ever, and was considered a great addition to the neighborhood. I took the earliest opportunity of going down to see him. " Oh,

my dear Reynolds, this is really kind of you to come without invitation. Your room is ready, and bed well aired, for it was slept in three nights ago. Come—Mrs. Willemott will be delighted to see you."

I found the girls still unmarried, but they were yet young. The whole family appeared as contented, and happy, and as friendly, as before. We sat down to dinner at six o'clock; the footman and the coachman attended. The dinner was good, but not by the artiste extra- ordinaire . I praised everything.

"Yes," replied he, "she is a very good cook; she unites the solidity of the English, with the delicacy of the French fere, and, altogether, I think it a decided improvement. Jane is quite a treasure." After dinner he observed, "Of course you know I have sold Belem Castle, and reduced my establishment? Government have not treated me fairly, but I am at the mercy of commissioners ; and a body of men will do that, which, as individuals, they would be ashamed of. The fact is, the odium is borne by no one in particular, and it is only the sense of shame which keeps us honest, I'm afraid. However, here you see me, with a comfortable fortune, and always happy to see my friends, especially my old schoolfellow. Will you take port or claret. The port is very fine, and so is the claret. By-the-by, do you know—I 'll let you into a family secret; Louisa is to be married to a Colonel Wilier—an excellent match. It has made us all happy."

The next day we drove out, not in an open carriage as before, but in a chariot and with a pair of horses.

" These are handsome horses," observed I.

" Yes," replied he, "I am fond of good horses; and, as I only keep a pair, I have the best. There is a certain degree of pretension in four horses, I do not much like: it appears as if you wished to overtop your neighbors."

I spent a few very pleasant days, and then quitted his hospitable roof. A severe cold, caught that winter, induced me to take the advice of the physicians, and proceed to the south of France, where I remained two years. On my return, I

was informed that Willemott had speculated, and had been unlucky on the Stock Exchange; that he had left Richmond, and was now living at Clapham. The next day I met him near the Exchange.

" Reynolds, I am happy to see you. Thompson told me that you had come back. If not better engaged, come down to see me; I will drive you down at four o'clock, if that will suit."

It suited me very well; and, at four o'clock, I met him, according to appointment, at a livery stable over the Iron Bridge. His vehicle was ordered out; it was a phaeton drawn by two long-tailed ponies—altogether a very neat concern—we set off at a rapid pace.

" They step out well, don't they? We shall be down in plenty time to put on a pair of shoes by five o'clock, which is our dinner time. Late dinners don't agree with me—they produce indigestion. Of course you know Louisa has a little boy."

I did not; but congratulated him.

" Yes; and has now gone out to India with her husband. Mary is also engaged to be married—a very good match—a Mr. Rivers, in the law. He has been called to the bar this year, and promises well. They will be a little pinched at first, but we must see what we can do for them."

We stopped at a neat row of houses, I forget the name, and, as we drove up, the servant, the only man servant, came out, and took the ponies round to the stable, while the maid received my luggage, and one or two paper bags, containing a few extras for the occasion.

I was met with the same warmth us usual by Mrs. Willemott. The house was small but very neat; the remnants of former grandeur appeared here and there, in'one or two little articles, favorites of the lady. We sat down at five o'clock to a plain dinner, and were attended by the footman, who had rubbed down the ponies and pulled on his livery.

" A good, plain cook is the best thing after all," observed Willemott. " Your fine cooks won't condescend to roast and boil. Will you take some of this sirloin?

the under-cut is excellent. My dear, give Mr. Reynolds some Yorkshire pudding."

When we were left alone after dinner, Willemott told me, very unconcernedly of his losses.

"It was my own fault," said he; " I wished to make up a little sum for the girls, and, risking what they would have had, I left them almost pennyless. However, we can always command a bottle of port and a beefsteak, and what more in this world can you have 1 Will you take port or white 1 I have no claret to offer you."

We finished our port, but I could perceive no difference in Willemott. He was just as happy and as cheerful as ever. He drove me to town the next day. During our drive, he observed, " I like ponies, they are so little trouble; and I prefer them to driving one horse in this vehicle, as I can put my wife and daughters into it. It's selfish to keep a carriage for yourself alone, and one horse in a four-wheeled double chaise appears like an imposition upon the poor animal."

I went to Scotland, and remained about a year. On my return, I found that my friend Willemott had again shifted his quarters. He was at Brighton; and having nothing better to do, I put myself in the " Times," and arrived at the Bedford Hotel. It was not until after some inquiry, that I could find out his address. At last I obtained it, in a respectable but not fashionable part of this overgrown town. Willemott received me just as before.

"I have no spare bed to offer you, but you must breakfast and dine with us every day. Our house is small, but it's very comfortable, and Brighton is a very convenient place. You know Mary is married. A good place in the courts was for sale, and my wife and I agreed to purchase it for Rivers. It has reduced us a

little, but they are very comfortable. I have retired from business altogether; in fact, as my daughters are both married, and we have enough to live upon, what can we wish for more? Brighton is very gay, and always healthy; and, as for carriages and horses, they are of no use here; they are to be had at every corner of the streets."

I accepted his invitation to dinner. A parlour-maid waited, but everything, although very plain, was clean and comfortable.

" I have still a bottle of wine for a friend, Reynolds," said Willemott, after dinner, " but, for my part, I prefer whiskey-toddy. It agrees with me better. Here's to the health of my two girls, God bless them, and success to them in life."

" My dear Willemott," said I, " I take the liberty of an old friend, but I am so astonished at your philosophy, that I cannot help it. When I call to mind Belem Castle, your large establishment, your luxuries, your French cook, and your stud of cattle, I wonder at your contented state of mind under such a change of circumstances."

"I almost wonder myself, my dear fellow," replied he. " I never could have believed, at that time, that I could live happily under such a change of circumstances; but the fact is, that although I have been a contractor, I have a good conscience; then, my wife is an excellent woman, and provided she sees me and her daughters happy, thinks nothing about herself; and, farther, I have made it a rule, as I have been going down hill, to find reasons why I should be thankful, and not discontented. Depend upon it, Reynolds, it is not a loss of fortune which will affect your happiness, as long as you have peace and love at home."

I took my leave of Willemott and his wife, with respect as well as regard; convinced that there was no pretended indifference to worldly advantages, that it was not that the grapes were sour, but that he had learned the whole art of happiness, by being contented with what he had, and by " cutting his coat according to his cloth."